

# VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

*For the*

State of Delaware, Division for the Visually Impaired

## **MEETING MINUTES**

**December 11, 2017 9:30am - 1:00pm**

**Location: Smyrna Rest Area**

**5500 DuPont Pkwy. Smyrna, DE 19977**

### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Kevin McAllister, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:30 am.

### **II. ROLL CALL**

Kevin McAllister (Chair), Elisha Jenkins, Director, Deborah Bradl (DVI), Shirley Bryson (DVI), Jill Morrison (DVI), Suzanne Howell (Member), Darryl Garner (Member), Blake Roberts (Vice Chair) (teleconference), Genelle Taylor ( DVI –Member) (teleconference), Grisel Espinosa (DVI)

### **III. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS VRAC MEETING**

The minutes for the meeting June 12, 2017, September 11, 2017 and November 13, 2017 to be voted on and approved.

### **IV. OLD BUSINESS**

**A.** CSNA- Veterans; Mrs. Bradl provided an update on the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), which is done every three years. one suggestion was to hold a focus group at a Veterans event called Stand Down. It is held downstate however is not until September and will be too late for this report. There are three more focus groups to be held in addition to the three already done. We are choosing focus groups based on the needs assessment results from 3 years ago. It was also suggested we add DVI verbiage to the new survey Monkey survey so people know it is for us. Is there a way to reach out to Native Americans groups? Mr. Garner suggested Stand to be at the next event for potential consumers to find out about their services.

**B. RSA - Mr. McAllister** states there has been no decision for the 2017 retreat. The time has passed, and the forms which were resubmitted (July - December 2017) are foregone. A meeting was requested between VRAC, DVI, and RSA so that everyone can understand what needs to be done to move forward. The retreat would have served as an avenue for training for the Council. The Town Hall meeting would have served to hear consumers' feedback and for potential members to join VRAC. DVI is trying to find a cost effective solution to provide more activities for the consumers. Mr. McAllister from VRAC suggested that DVI needs to be more creative in the upcoming 2018 retreat. The activities may need to be independent from the Town Hall meeting. Mr. Garner suggested to have an activity similar to White Cane Day. The event needs to be held sometime between March/April and October.

**C. Strategic Planning Work Streams - Mr. McAllister** encouraged council members to be participating on the strategic planning for 2018. Ms. Howell is volunteering. Mr. Garner was also added to the Transition Work Stream team.

## **V. NEW / SPECIAL BUSINESS**

**A. DVI Changes - Mr. McAllister** reported that Deputy Director Dr. Harrington now overseeing the education and Orientation and Mobility units.

**B. TVI Reduction - Mr. McAllister** asked how the reduction is affecting services. Ms. Jenkins will be researching this and getting back to the committee. DVI will continue to reroute services and continue to receive applications for teaching staff until February. Teaching staff is currently at 6 TVI and 8 Emergency Certified Teachers. DOE is no longer submitting emergency certifications to teachers are to change legislation by January 2018 the teachers need to have certifications completed, otherwise develop an alternate plan to certification.

**C. Council training - Mr. McAllister** suggested trainings as a pathway for the meeting since there aren't any more TACE centers. They are trying to get trainings and or speakers from the Governor's office, RSA, or other places suggested. Please send topics of interest by email to Kevin McAllister.

**D. Kevin McAllister** spoke with Lydia Massey Director and Ray Lewis deputy director of the Boards and Commission regarding the correct list of council members since there is a new administration. Mr. McAllister reviewed the information from Mr. Lewis regarding vacancies. There are openings for business, labor, and a parent on the council. Mr. McAllister discussed deferent

activities needed to recruit for those vacancies. The Secretary has to be the one to appoint for the DOE vacancy. Also there is barriers in the application process. The process is lengthy and the application should be accessible in the spirit of promoting independence. There are currently barriers for the visually impaired to apply due to the inaccessibility of the application. Ms. Morrison spoke with Matthew Tseronis with DVI Assistive Technology and found that there are some areas on the application that are accessible and some that aren't. They are working to assist them in putting accessible documents in place, and Ms. Morrison will keep the council posted as to the progress. Mr. Blake Roberts mentioned Title II of the ADA discusses that applications should be accessible. More discussion of resolutions to the issue of vacancies arose. Mr. McAllister inquired if there could be assistance through the VR Counselors to get that information to their consumers. Ms. Bryson mentioned that all councils are mentioned during orientation and disseminated through Ms. Debbie Talley who makes announcements and sends newsletters to the Visually Impaired Consumer Registry.

**D. Officer Election for 2018** - Mr. McAllister having no opponents was unanimously elected chair .Current Vice Chair Blake Roberts was challenged by Suzanne Howell. Ms. Howell won and is now Vice Chair.

**E. Advocacy Activities** - Mr. McAllister stated the following;

- JFC will be during the month of February.
- The retreat will be sometime during the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of March.
- May is Healthy Eye Month - Dover Days.

## **VI. DVI Administrator Report**

Administrator Report – Ms. Bryson reported the following data as of 9/10/2017:

- 276 caseload
- 4 Individuals employed
- 0 successful closures
- 28 Individuals who are ready to work
- 0 Individuals employed for more than 90 days
- 4 employed less than 90 days employed
- 69 currently in a training or higher education program
- 25 Ready to work
- 95 are transition ages 14-21 years old
- 116 transition ages 14-24 years old

## **Partnerships**

- Delaware SPCA
- Project Search- Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center
- Jewish Family Services (Non-Profit Agency)
- City of Wilmington
- Health Core
- City of Dover
- Zenith Products

## **Success Stories**

- Staff ensured that six transition students were transported to the Transition Conference. DVI took responsibility to transport students if schools were not providing transportation.
- Four consumers applied for the Delaware Partners in Public Policymaking program to start in Feb. 2018.
- The BEP OJT consumers are moving along in the BEP program.
- One of our consumers is finishing her internship at the Helen Keller Center in New York. Which may read a possible job.
- Two of our transition consumers have found a work-based learning experience with Habitat for Humanity. Both individuals are currently receiving supported employment services and are enrolled with St. John's Community Services.
- One of our transition students applied for a job with Christmas Tree Shop.

## **DVI Directors report**

**Division for the Visually Impaired  
Council of the Blind- December 2017**

## **Delaware Industries for the Blind:**

The Production Department continues to fulfill Federal contractual orders for USGS.

DVI continues to work with NIB and USGS to finalize the transfer by January 31, 2018.

### **Blind Entrepreneurs Program:**

The Food Truck vendors on the Herman Holloway Campus have seen a significant drop in business since DHSS went to the blog announcement system. In speaking with patrons, feedback suggests that employees are not aware of the trucks presence on Campus nor of any daily menu offerings.

The BEP Cafeteria and Catering business at the Delaware Technical Community College has been working through some issues in conjunction with College staff. The BEP vendor operating the site has stepped down and the Division's BEP Director has been re-assessing the operation and is currently addressing additional healthy food choices, staff, food and catering costs, and updated marketing plan, and public relations.

There were not any applicants for BEP Operators from the most recent Open House.

BEP Audit- DVI received three proposals. DVI is updating the scope of services for the auditing of the program. It is anticipated the rules of engagement with a vendor will begin in the spring of 2018.

### **Independent Living Services:**

A sensitivity presentation was facilitated for Administrative Specialists in the Department's main building on November 16<sup>th</sup>. The goal of this presentation was to provide tips on how to interact with a person who is blind or visually impaired. The information disseminated included a demonstration of basic sighted guide technique and a discussion of the "How to interact with a Person Who is Blind or Visually Impaired" handout, distributed they the American Foundation for the Blind. A 20/20 pen and a signature guide were also given to the group as accessibility tools for visitors with vision loss that might visit the building. Another session is planned on December 6<sup>th</sup>.

The Independent Living Unit participated in the Delaware Diabetes Coalition's 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Diabetes Expo on November 14. The expo combined health screenings, break away sessions, and exhibits to increase awareness of the ways to manage this chronic disease. The Division partnered with the local chapter of the National Federation of the Blind to cost-share exhibit space. Melodye May, the Division's ILS Social Services Administrator, was the emcee for the event.

### **Funding Update: ILS Part B Grant:**

The Administration on Community Living announced the combining of programs into a single statewide, cross-disability entity is no longer under discussion for future budgets. If this should change, she ensures that the network would be informed. This development safeguards funding that is received by DVI's ILS program to provide services to individuals from 18-54.

### Upcoming Events

December 6 – Sensitivity Presentation, Main Building, Administrative Specialists

December 7 – Holiday Baking Workshop, DVI, New Castle

### Outreach:

On Tuesday, November 7, 2017, New Castle County Government, in conjunction with the New Castle County of Commerce, Emerging Enterprise Center, Technically Delaware, the State of Delaware’s Office of Supplier Diversity, and the Delaware Banking Community, held an “Open for Business” event. All entities invited members of the business community to learn how to do business with government agencies and large businesses. The event also coincided with Innovation Week. Our VR Business Consultant has one consumer that is interested in working in the IT field, and met at least one contact that hires in that field.

The Division’s Vocational Rehabilitation team attended and exhibited at the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Mental Health Conference hosted by Mental Health Association in Delaware. This year’s conference theme was the “Opioid Epidemic”. The Division promoted their services and also expanded upon their business relationships throughout our state. One of the Division’s VR Business Consultants had the honor of moderating a panel discussion amongst professionals in various fields of study. The topic was the “Impact of Addictions & Mental Illness on Our Communities.

The Division’s Vocational Rehabilitation team attended the Annual Woman’s Business Expo hosted by the New Castle County Chamber of Commerce. This event allowed the opportunity to network and see what other businesses are doing; including small businesses and non-profits. Our Business Consultants were able to personally connect with representative from PNC, Dana, SCORE, TD Bank, and the Hilton; with which they will follow-up for additional information and possible partnerships.

Education: One teacher for the visually impaired resigned from DVI. There are 14 teachers. DVI continues to recruit for Education and Orientation and Mobility.

Orientation and Mobility: DVI is experiencing a personnel shortage which may lead to a waitlist for services. DVI is working

## **VII. Announcements/public Comments:**

None

## **VIII. Adjournment**

Mr. McAllister adjourned the meeting at 11:23am

Respectfully Submitted,

Grisel Espinosa